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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/22/2016  
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SY](#) [IR](#)  
SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS ROUNDUP: LABWANI CASE POSTPONED;  
IRANIAN REFUGEE DEPORTED TO IRAN

REF: DAMASCUS 2214

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Kathy Johnson-Casares for reasons 1.4(b)/(d)

11. (C) LABWANI TRIAL DELAYED; ASSOCIATE TELLS OF SARG INTIMIDATION ATTEMPTS: The trial of Kamal Labwani, scheduled to begin May 22, has been delayed after court officials claimed that no trial had been scheduled for that day. Labwani's family members, human rights lawyers, and a number of opposition activists, as well as Poloff, had gathered at the Palace of Justice to observe the Labwani case on May 22. Human rights lawyer Rezan Zeituneh noted that the lawyers had confirmed the trial date a number of times, most recently the afternoon of May 21, leading lawyers to believe that the "mistake" had indeed been an intentional maneuver by the SARG. The trial is now set to begin May 29.

12. (C) Meanwhile, Labwani's associate, Wissam Tarif, told Poloff on May 17 that he had been called in for interrogation a number of times over the last month by Political Security Directorate (PSD) officials in Zabadani, a village outside of Damascus. Tarif said that the PSD officials had asked him to testify against Labwani, saying that Labwani had received USG funding with Tarif as a middleman and that Tarif had arranged Labwani's October 2005 trip to the U.S. According to Tarif, it appears that SARG authorities do not realize that he had actually traveled with Labwani to the U.S. Tarif noted that he told the PSD officials that he would not commit perjury by lying about something he had not done and refused to testify against Labwani. Tarif, a Lebanese citizen, stated that the PSD officials then insinuated that his decision could have dire consequences for his Syrian residency permit, which has been in process for over two years. Tarif told Poloff that since his recovery from cancer surgery and chemotherapy in March and April, he has begun working closely again with the Labwani family on publicizing Kamal's case.

13. (C) AHWAZI IRANIAN REFUGEE DEPORTED TO IRAN; OTHER AHWAZIS ARRESTED: Local and international human rights organizations have reported the arrest of nine Ahwazi Iranians on May 11, many of whom are reportedly UN-recognized refugees. Among those arrested were Faleh 'Abdullah al-Mansuri, an Iranian/Dutch national and President of the Ahwazi Liberation Organization. According to Amnesty International, one of the Ahwazis, Sa'id 'Awda al-Saki, was reportedly returned to Iran, where he faces the death penalty. A Norwegian Embassy consular officer told Emboff on May 17 that an unidentified Ahwazi (possibly Saki) had been granted refugee status for Norway four months ago but had been prevented from leaving the country by SARG officials who refused him an exit stamp. He was recently deported back to Iran. Local diplomats have speculated that the arrests and deportation are further indications of an ever-stronger

relationship between Iran and Syria.  
JOHNSON-CASARES